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AUTHOR Jacobo, Joe E.
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of fine arts education in the school curriculum and advocates the necessity to arrive at a definition of accountability of program effectiveness. The document cites the many advantages students gain from participation in a fine arts program and speaks of the interdisciplinary nature of the arts. The paper discusses the need for strong educational leadership and advocacy of the arts program on the part of the principal. (EH)

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A New Need for Developing Successful Fine Arts Program Evaluations

Accountability, has begun to sound like a terrible thirteen letter profanity word in educational society, especially in the fine arts programs. In most high schools fine arts programs include band, orchestra, choir, and visual arts. Educational accountability, in and of itself, is not necessarily the problem. Everybody would like to see schools accountable to the public. The controversy is rooted in beliefs of what constitutes knowledge and how it can be demonstrated.

Effective evaluation of the fine arts program is needed, to ensure and demonstrate, that it is indeed playing an essential role in meeting the school's mission. Another important reason for justifying the fine arts is because all over the country, in small and big cities, budgets are tightening and the demand on schools to deliver better quality education with fewer resources is increasing.

The extracurricular efforts are especially difficult to describe and evaluate, though they are considered quite valuable and necessary extensions of the academic programs (Seidel 8). Many people support the arts, and believe they are a very important part of the school. It no longer seems sufficient to let the arts programs proceed without clearly documented goals.

The demands of our changing society and the information age are requiring that schools attempt to reach a more diverse group of students in a greater variety of ways and to develop a wider range of more complex skills and knowledge within those students (9). It is becoming more obvious that exploring

and studying the arts is one way to develop many of the diverse thinking skills that will be needed in the society and workplace of the near future. Excellence in music education and excellence in academic improvement go hand in hand. Schools on the brink of failure, which have incorporated the arts as the nucleus of the curriculum, are finding that their students experience success (Straub 33). Students are staying in school, and academic achievement has improved .

Integration of the Arts

For many years, arts educators have been trying to rationalize why the arts deserve an essential place in our schools. The arts can provide positive outlets for individuality in an environment (the schools) where such outlets are clearly needed (Fuller 1). When students are taught well, the arts strengthen individuality by giving more attention than other academic disciplines. What this basically means is that arts education stimulates people to think and feel for themselves, rather than simply recollect something someone else has learned or accomplished.

In addition, the arts can help young students learn to understand and to use language with thoroughness. Where but in the arts does one examine the power and influence of rhythm in our lives, the relationships of form and meaning, the values of vicarious experiences, and the effects of color, light, and shadow on the human mind as well as on the human's eye. What other discipline teaches power and value of human intuition (3).

Fine Arts Programs - Integration

1. MUSIC IS A SCIENCE. It is exact, specific; and it demands exact acoustics. A conductors full score is a chart, a graph which indicates frequencies, intensities, volume changes, melody, and harmony all at once and with the most exact control of time.

2. ARTS AND MUSIC ARE MATHEMATICAL. It is rhythmically based on the subdivisions of time into fractions which must be done instantaneously. Use of geometric figures.

3. MUSIC IS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. Most of the terms are in Italian, German, or French; and the notation is certainly not English--but a highly developed kind of shorthand that uses symbols to represent ideas. The semantics of music is the most complete and universal language.

4. ARTS AND MUSIC ARE HISTORY. Music and the arts usually reflect the environment and times of its creation, often even the country and/or racial feeling.

5. MUSIC IS PHYSICAL EDUCATION. It requires fantastic coordination of fingers, hands, arms, lip, cheek, and facial muscles, in addition to extraordinary control of the diaphragm, back, stomach, and chest muscles, which respond instantly to the sound the ear hears and the mind interprets.

6. MUSIC AND ARTS DEVELOP INSIGHT AND DEMAND RESEARCH.

7. MUSIC AND THE ARTS ARE ALL THESE THINGS, BUT MOST OF ALL, MUSIC IS ART. It allows a human being to take all these dry, technically boring (but difficult) techniques and use them to create emotion. That is one thing science cannot duplicate: Humanism, Feeling, emotion, call it what you will.

Principal's leadership Role

The principal is the steward of the goals of education at the local level of operations where it matters most. He or she is the primary bridge between the school's external and internal environments, between the "what" and the "how" of the education system (10). A school in which the faculty, staff, and principal are committed to the same objective allows management and evaluation of the rightful goals in the educational program, without requiring extreme concern about the insignificant mechanics involved in meeting those goals.

> "Transformative leaders seek to develop schools that are both tightly and loosely structured--tight on values and loose on how values are embodied in the practice of teaching, supervision, and administration... In many school improvement efforts, there is a glaring lack of understanding of what accountability is and how it works. Accountability and responsibility go hand in hand"...(Sergiovanni 1989).

The procedure of defining the school's mission and objectives, with the arts program faculty, communicates the understanding that the arts are expected to become an influential part of the school's work, and that arts educators will be held to the higher principle that they themselves are working with the principal to set. Hence, probably the most important result of the procedure is that the principal defines school purposes which result in specific outcomes and goals that teachers strive to accomplish. These goals are the key to allowing the principal to work with the arts educator to effectively and fairly evaluate and shape arts programs--programs that by definition rely on the recognition of ambiguity, innovation, diversity, and variation (Seidel 11).

Fine Arts Program Evaluations

Principals and arts educators must work together to develop an evaluation and improvement period for the arts program. What principals and arts educators might look for, ideally, is a way that program assessment can become an extension of the whole education process. Allowing the principal to receive information needed for proper evaluation without taking away from the real goal of the program--teaching students (12). Equally important, arts educators must address some agreement about grading consensus across the arts program. They must develop ways and procedures for reporting the results of their assessment and evaluation assignments that will be important to the principal, faculty, and public. Here are some suggestions in developing a process of evaluation in the fine arts program.

A. Develop a defensible grading system before meeting your students.

B. Performance groups tend to result in subjective grading. You have to inquire of your administration if you will be allowed to grade on concert and rehearsal attendance, uniform, etc.

C. Have your system approved by the administration and publish it.

D. To avoid the "gradeless" grade book and in an attempt to make the class more objective, have written mini-tests each week. Terminology, music theory, and music history.

E. Evaluation of the program, like student assessment, should be an internal part of the program itself where ever possible, and not an afterthought.

F. Invite some visiting artist to address assessment and the school objectives, and review the progress at school at regular basis.

G. Incorporating some kind of evaluation technique into the teaching process as much as possible.

In conclusion, principals are more interested in the value, and worth of the arts program. Their primary concern is to evaluate the goals as well as the efforts to meet those goals, they are not directly concerned with analyzing the students' assignment. All these responsibilities belong specifically to the team of arts educators. Effective evaluation of the arts program does not require that the principal be an expert in the arts, so much as a good manager and facilitator of the experts that are available (13). Often the intent of assessment is not to determine whether the student has attained a right or wrong answer, but to demonstrate an effective artistic effort, to show an ability to make and justify artistic choices, and to grow in ability to create in a variety of circumstances. (Seidel 16).

All the school subjects in the curriculum are beginning to seek more in-depth and significant evaluation of educational goals. Educational researchers, scholars, business, and the general public have come to expect more thorough results from our schools. Compared to other subject areas in the curriculum, the arts appear much more challenging to categorize and assess. If arts programs, in whatever state of chaos, are serving a purpose, they can be evaluated and improved. Principals can provide the leadership to help ensure that students can reap the benefits of participating in a quality arts program that is an integral part of the school's whole educational effort (Seidel 19).

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